

ARTICLE APPEARED
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WASHINGTON TIMES
12 August 1985

Trying to slow us down

ARNOLD BEICHMAN

There is fairly wide agreement that the Soviet economy is in big trouble as it tries to modernize itself, as it tries to move from being a not very efficient industrial economy into becoming an information society.

Trying to drag the Soviet economy from the 20th century into the 21st century would be an insuperable job even if Mikhail Gorbachev, the new Soviet boss, were to try Stalinist terror methods of persuasion.

The dominant characteristic of any modern economy is information processing, computerism, storage and retrieval of data, and above all, R&D — research and development. If only to maintain its present military superiority, the Soviet Union must enter the Information Age or fall behind as a 21st-century superpower.

Since the Soviet economy cannot be altered from within — and it cannot because the Information Age necessitates free exchange of data, a state of affairs which would be anathema to the KGB — then Mr. Gorbachev has two alternatives:

1. Steal technology secrets from the United States and other advanced societies like Japan, a sort of turnkey factory tactic. But you can never steal enough secrets from a highly inventive society.

2. Slow the United States from advancing as rapidly as it is into the Information Age.

This "slow-down-your-opponent" tactic has been used in diplomacy by

the Soviets, such as protracting negotiations during a crisis until the Soviets get what they want. This tactic has great possibilities in the technology race.

In technological competition, the U.S.S.R. doesn't have a chance and it knows that, which explains why the KGB has staked out Silicon Valley as its happy hunting ground. Therefore, it is predictable that the U.S.S.R. will seek to break the American political will so the United States will slow down of its own

accord in resisting Soviet geopolitical advances.

The phrase, "active measures," covers a panoply of tactics and stratagems to be used against the United States and its allies. The aim of this strategy is to persuade American political opinion to oppose appropriation of funds essential for continuing high-technology defense R&D, such as the Strategic Defense Initiative.

One can predict that in coming months, we will see an intensification of mass peace movements in the democracies, those which seek to instill a will to unilateral disarmament, a faith in pacifism in a jungle world, and a spirit that nothing is worth fighting for. As the slogan ran in the 1950s, better Red than dead.

One can also predict that in coming months, there will be renewed terrorism against the democracies, something like the suicide bombing against the U.S. Marines in Beirut. It would not be surprising to see such an attack by pro-Soviet Filipino terrorists against U.S. bases in Subic Bay and Clark Field in the Philippines.

The Soviet-allied Radical Entente — Syria, Iran, Libya, North Korea, and Cuba — will in coming months act with even greater audacity against the United States and its overseas commitments. Such tactics against the United States, the Radical Entente has proven, work with little danger to anybody except the American victims.

Nothing has yet happened to the perpetrators of the KAL airliner destruction and its taking of 269 innocent lives, the slaughter of 241 U.S. Marines Oct. 23, 1983, in Beirut, the assassination of Maj. Nicholson in Berlin, the TWA hostage-takers and killers of a Navy diver, the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and U.S. embassies in many other parts of the world, and the killing of Americans in El Salvador.

The Soviet Union is determined to stop American R&D from spurting ahead because it is determined to stop SDI. Mr. Gorbachev thinks he knows how to do just that. The future looks dreary, summit or not.

One must hope that we're just not going to wait and see.

Arnold Beichman, visiting scholar, Hoover Institution, is a student of Soviet affairs.